1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

as a way of getting him to start on your yarn in a hurry. If you didn't, he would not do it until he got ready. They were independent, all right, and then when they were finished, you had to reach down into your pocket and pay for what he did. There used to be a lot of weavers here, but they are all gone now. The women have got out of weaving the wool.

A weaver here, Paddy Seán R—, was a very fine fellow though he drank a lot. You cannot blame him for that because his job was a mean one and bad on the health. He worked to keep his mother out of the workhouse and till the day she died he would not let her go there. Wasn't that a decent thing for him to do? Afterwards he went to Galway and then he came back here and as an old man he died in the workhouse. But wasn't it a decent thing he would not let his poor old mother go and her going up the streets of the town every morning collecting the urine from the people who lived in the house [to use for bleaching].

These three occupations were the meaner ones in the eyes of the country people. It was not that they degraded their followers. Rather it was that they were intrinsically of less value than the more robust crafts of outdoor life. Something of the sexual dichotomization of labor was involved in this attitude equating sedentary, house-bound pursuits with the feminine spheres of activity.

The chief exponents of the robuster, more masculine crafts within local ken were the carpenter, the mason, the house builder, and the smith. But there were many others. Between the landless or "backward" cotters and laborers, who might turn their hand to anything, and the small farmers, who were themselves occasionally forced to turn to harvesting abroad or to road-mending and stone-breaking at home, there were as many specialists as there were activities in which special renown and skill could be attained. In fact, the development of local skills seems restricted only by the limits of the *matériel* which peasant life requires.

Other local experts were the thatcher, the cattle doctor or "vet," often a herdsmen with a lifelong experience of

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
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Inishbofin

Begging is practically unknown, and drunkenness, as a habit, does not exist, the sobriety being very noticeable on holidays, though occasional bouts of drinking are sometimes indulged in when a good take of fish has been made. They are very conscientious in their religious observances, and depend greatly on the advice and control of their clergy, with regard to temporal as well as spiritual affairs. Sexual irregularities are extremely rare, no case of illegitimacy having been recorded from the islands for years.

As fishermen they are brave, hardy, and extremely venturesome; this applies especially to the men of Inishshark, who are reputed in Bofin to be the best and most daring boatmen on the west coast.

Quarrels often occur, but a regular stand-up fight appears to be unknown, the men usually contenting themselves with abusive language, or at most a sudden blow or stone-throwing. A woman when angered may use very abusive language towards a man, as she would be practically safe from any fear of physical violence on his part, even when she was very provoking.

On the other hand, they are not without faults. In their ordinary life they are thriftless, and not too cleanly in many of their habits, and have but little regard for ordinary sanitary laws; their veracity, too, is not altogether unimpeachable, while the people of the mainland allege that they have a very strong aversion to the payment of debts, rent, and cess, for the last-named of which they owe over £1300.

The habits and manners of the people of Shark are much the same as those described above. The people are noted for their loyalty to one another; they never tell any stranger anything about their local affairs. They are kindly and civil to visitors, always crowding down to assist them on landing, but are said to be capable of acts of ferocity when roused.

5. *Folk-names.*—The following list of fifty-one surnames comprises all those now to be met with on the islands. Some of these names, however, are those of families not long established on the islands, while others, formerly common, as Gorham and Halligan, are now without representatives.

The Gorhams are still, to some extent, connected with Inishbofin, as one of them is proprietor of the only shop there worth the name, and in addition holds a farm, but he lives on the mainland, and manages them by deputy, only occasionally visiting the place himself. It is possible that, owing to the heavy emigration, other surnames may also have disappeared. In the list of surnames given in the

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

241 sometimes raises cases of trespass. The fences are the usual dry stone
[423] walls of the west, and the fields seldom have gates.
[417] The crops most grown are barley, oats, potatoes, and a little rye, and a few turnips. The manures are sea-weed and farm-yard manure, and occasionally old thatch, saturated with peat smoke, and well rotted with age. The agricultural implements employed are the spade and shovel, and the sickle; the use of plough or harrow is not known. Low-lying, damp places are utilized for the growth of osiers for panniers, baskets, and lobster-pots.

As is the case in many fishing communities, the fields are not well kept, and have a rather untended appearance, the weeds being let grow rankly in the potato fields, the reason given for which is that without the shelter given by the weeds the crop would be speedily destroyed by the winds; but the most probable explanation is that the amount of attention directed towards the fishing at the most critical periods of the year causes the less important occupation to be to some extent neglected. A family keeps a couple of pigs, some
[231] sheep, a cow or two, geese (of which large flocks are kept on the islands), ducks and fowl, but no turkeys.

735 Some sixty families are said to be in very poor circumstances, and of these forty-six have no cattle.

231 The animals are to a large extent supported on the very extensive commonage.

The pigs, cattle, and fowl are taken into the houses at night, while the sheep, geese, and ponies get shelter how they can. The pigs are not regularly fed, but have, as the people express it, "the run of their teeth" of the island, and by feeding on such provision as they can pick up on the sea-shore, the flesh is often rendered rank and fishy-flavoured.

372 Fuel is supplied either by peat cut from the bogs, or, in a large proportion of cases, by "scraws" of the thin peaty layer which covers the rocky surface of the higher and wilder parts of the islands, cut into blocks the size of peats, and dried in the sun. The substance thus obtained can be burned, and will throw out considerable heat, but is extremely dirty and wasteful, as it contains a large proportion of earth and small pebbles, which are left in the ash. From repeated cuttings of these "scraws" the surface of the higher ground has become much deteriorated in value, and this is especially the case on
[237] Inishshark, where there are no bogs. In times of scarcity fish-bones and cow-mats (*bois de vâche*) are used as fuel.

373 For light, petroleum lamps and candles are now generally used,

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

November 1st. Imbolc heralded the coming of spring with the lactation of ewes, while at Beltaine cattle were driven to open grazing after passing between bonfires which magically protected them against disease and ensured their fertility. The harvest commenced with Lughnasa, and the grazing season ended with Samhain. Of these festivals, Imbolc has become reinterpreted with the feast of St. Brigid; Beltaine and Samhain, known today as May Day and Allhallows respectively, have remained almost untouched by Christianity and are observed in Inis Beag; but Lughnasa has disappeared from island tradition. Lughnasa still is celebrated in many parts of Ireland and is the subject of a monumental folklore study—Maire MacNeill's *The Festival of Lughnasa*; until the introduction of early potatoes into Inis Beag, harvesting commenced on this day, but any other practices associated with Lughnasa were abandoned long ago. Minor pagan festivals have become reinterpreted with Whitsuntide and the feasts of St. John, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, all of which are observed in Inis Beag.

Brigid, the most renowned of Irish female saints, was a cowherd and therefore is associated with cattle and with flowers, such as the dandelion, which nourish young lambs in the spring. On the last day of January, a small "Brigid's Cross" is fashioned from straw in each household of Inis Beag, and is thrust into the thatching at the end of the feast day. Crosses once were made from rushes, wood, metal, and even paper, and it is possible to determine the age of a thatched cottage being dismantled or renovated by counting the number of crosses salvaged from the straw debris. The Celts worshipped the sun whose symbol was the swastika, and the Brigid's Cross takes this form. It is a charm which protects the house (and the byre on the mainland) and those within it from harm, especially by fire, during the year. At the beginning of this century, a destitute woman who lived alone used to go from door to door begging for food and carrying a large "Brigid's Doll" made of straw and dressed immaculately in white with a picture of the saint on its breast. Some of the folk pulled straw from the doll to manufacture their crosses. After the woman recited the following poem, she was presented with food in honor of the saint, for which she blessed each person in the household with the doll:

Here comes Brigid	She is deaf and
Dressed in white.	She is dumb.
Give her something	For God's sake,
For the night.	Give her some.

Today, small groups of girls travel about the island emulating their predecessor by begging for coins to buy candy and donate to the church. A Brigid's Doll dressed in confirmation garb is carried by the leader of each group, and is used to confer blessings after the girls have recited in unison the two verses.

May Eve and Allhallows' Eve are both times when it is dangerous to go out of doors alone at night or be abroad after midnight, for the "big fellow" roams the back of the island, and everywhere pagan fairies, witches, vindictive ghosts, and the dog of the tumulus search for human victims. The safety of cattle is of particular concern to the folk on May Eve, and a common practice is to attach to the horn or tail of a cow a cloth containing a piece of iron which has